

# VAYIGASH

11th of 54 sedras;  
11th of 12 in B'reishit



Written on 178.07 lines (ranks 34th)

Vayigash is composed of 3 parshiyot,  
all closed, one VERY closed.

Actually, Vayigash has only 2.89  
parshiot; it ends after 34 p'sukim of a  
38-pasuk parsha; Vayigash is the only  
sedra that does not end with a parsha  
break. (This shows up in a printed  
Chumash by there not being a  
PEI-PEI-PEI or SAMACH-SAMACH-  
SAMACH between Vayigash and  
Vaychi, but in a Sefer Torah,  
Vayigash's final word, which is M'OD,  
is followed by Vaychi's first word,  
which is VAYCHI, with nothing  
between them but a regular space  
between words.)

106 p'sukim - ranks 28th; tied with  
To-l'dot and Bo. It is much smaller  
than Bo, a bit larger than To-l'dot

1480 words (30th); 5680 letters (29th)

9th in B'reishit in all 3 categories

## MITZVOT

None of Taryag are in Vayigash

## Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start  
of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is

Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the  
parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in  
the parsha.

## Kohen - First Aliya - 13 p'sukim - 44:18-30

[S> 44:18 (52)] The sedra begins with  
the dramatic confrontation between  
Yehuda and Yosef. Yehuda risks his life  
when he approaches the "Egyptian  
leader" in an attempt to save  
Binyamin. The first Aliya ends with  
the emotion-filled description by  
Yehuda of the feelings between  
Yaakov and Binyamin - V'NAFSHO  
K'SHURA V'NAFSHO, and his soul is  
bound with his soul.

**SDT:** Yehuda confronted the as-yet-  
unrevealed Yosef as an equal. It can  
be said, that whenever one  
approaches a confrontational situa-  
tion, it is best to think in terms of  
facing one's adversary on equal  
footing. Thinking oneself inferior will  
often create a self-fulfilling disadvan-  
tage. One will tend not to fight with  
sufficient confidence because of the  
expectation of defeat. Feeling  
superior to one's adversary will often  
lead to over-confidence. Remember  
not to under-estimate your enemy...  
or yourself.

**THE TORAH NOTES** on the opening  
words of the sedra explain what was  
going on. **KADMA V'AZLA R'VI'I,**  
**ZARKA MUNACH SEGOL.** The 4th  
(son) went forward (to confront

Yosef), because he had thrown away his place among the Chosen (Nation) (by guaranteeing the safe return of Binyamin) - *attributed to the GR"A*

**SDT:** The Alshich asks: At the end of Parshat Mikeitz, Yehuda is completely resigned to his (and his brothers') fate. The Egyptian ruler has accused them of stealing his special chalice. Yehuda offers that the one in whose possession the cup is found shall be put to death and that the others would all be slaves. When the cup is "found" in Binyamin's possession, Yehuda meekly submits (to the slavery suggestion). Yosef (as yet unrevealed) nobly refuses Yehuda's offer and announces that he will take only the "culprit" as a slave - the rest are free to return in peace to their father. That is the "cliff-hanger" ending of Mikeitz. At the beginning of Vayigash, Yehuda changes from the lamb awaiting slaughter, to the lion - which becomes the hallmark of his tribe, risking his life in his confrontation with the enigmatic Egyptian leader. What caused the change in Yehuda's demeanor? The Alshich answers brilliantly: As long as Yehuda expected all the brothers to be enslaved, he viewed the events as G-d's punishment for their selling Yosef. This he could and would accept. When it turned out that only Binyamin would be enslaved - the only one not involved in Mechirat Yosef, Yehuda realized that this was

not punishment for what they had done. Now his protective instincts and his promise to his father Yaakov take over. Yehuda boldly faces this "Egyptian" at the beginning of Vayigash and is prepared to risk all to save Binyamin.

Yosef heard his father referred to as "your servant - my father" ten times (5 times from Yehuda and another 5 from the interpreter) and he did not object and/or reveal his identity to prevent the humiliation of his father. For this, commentators say, Yosef lost 10 years of life and died at 110, younger than any of his brothers.

**SDT:** Chassdic masters see a "layer of messages" for us beneath the wording of Yehuda's plea. "...and (if) he leaves his father, he will die." If a person abandons his Father (G-d), forsakes the Torah, then he will die a spiritual death.

**Ever notice** that when Yosef interrogated the Brothers, he asked them if they had a father or brother. Not if they had a mother. Baal HaTurim says it was because he knew that their (and his) mother had already died. Let's call this even a subconscious omission. The Torah tells us of Rachel's passing. According to Tradition, Leah died about six years after Rachel did. By the time of the sale of Yosef, both were long gone.

**Here's a thought...** When they were younger, and when they perceived

that Yaakov loved Yosef above all, the brothers were dangerously jealous. Here, Yehuda speaks of the special love bond between Yaakov and Binyamin, and does not seem to be jealous, but rather protective (and fond) of the other son of Rachel - Yehuda's mother's rival. T'shuva? Maturity? Or both?

## Levi - Second Aliya - 11 p'sukim - 44:31-45:7

Yehuda tells Yosef that Yaakov is likely to die if the brothers return without Binyamin. He adds that he has personally guaranteed Binyamin's return and "how can I return to my father without the lad..."

Remember that Yehuda had previously returned to his father without the other lad, Yosef. In fact, he was the one who suggested selling Yosef to the passing caravan. The current situation with Binyamin is Yehuda's opportunity for complete repentance - T'SHUVA G'MURA - for what he had done to Yosef.

Yosef cannot contain himself any longer and orders the room cleared of all "outsiders". He bursts with emotion and announces to his dumb-struck brothers that he is Yosef. Immediately, Yosef asks, "Is my father still alive?" Yosef repeats his shocking revelation, with details, so the brothers will believe what they are hearing. He then admonishes them not to be angry

with each other, since it was G-d's plan that he should be properly positioned to save his family from the famine.

**SDT:** Torah T'mima brings the Gemara in Chagiga in the name of Rabbi Elazar who makes the following powerful observation: If the children of Israel were not able to respond to Yosef's short statement of reproach, imagine how much more so it will be difficult for us to respond to G-d's reproach for the myriad wrongdoings as individuals and as a community.

**PONDER THIS:** The sale of Yosef was a monstrous sin, regardless of how G-d planned things to turn out (and regardless of Yosef's calming words to his brothers). The Midrash says: G-d said to the People of Israel - You sold your brother into slavery. I swear by your lives that every year you will say, AVADIM HAYINU L'FAR'O B'MITZRAYIM, we were slaves to Par'o in Egypt. What G-d has in mind does not change a person's responsibility for his own actions and motives.

**SDT:** When Yosef finally reveals himself to his brothers, he makes a compound statement: "I am Yosef - Is my father still alive?" Many commentaries ask why Yosef asks that question in this way and at this dramatic moment - especially since he has been hearing about Yaakov from the brothers all along.

Some see in it a short but powerful reproach to the brothers, as if to say,

"Is it possible that my father can still be alive after what you've put him through?" If this is indeed the meaning of his question, then Yosef too must bear some of the burden and shame, since he also caused Yaakov suffering by not having communicated with him that he was alive during his years as prime minister in Egypt. (Although there are various reasons given in the sources as to why Yosef did not inform Yaakov of his well-being, it is difficult not to throw some criticism in Yosef's direction.)

Another interpretation suggests that Yosef might have assumed that his brothers had been lying to him about their father. They might have told him that Yaakov was alive to elicit sympathy, but he might have been dead. Therefore, now that he has told his brothers who he really is, Yosef asks the most important question on his mind - Is my father really still alive?

## Shlishi - Third Aliya - 20 p'sukim - 45:8-27

Yosef again tells the brothers that it wasn't they who sent him to Egypt, but rather it was G-d. He then sends them to bring their father down to Egypt (to Goshen) where the family will be well-cared for during the remaining years of the famine. The brothers embrace and cry. Only then are the brothers able to talk to Yosef.

Meanwhile, Par'o becomes aware of the reunion and offers his generous hospitality to the family. Yosef gives his brothers clothing, but gives Binyamin even more (specifically, 5 sets of clothing and 300 silver pieces).

**Observation...** Notice that once again a son of Rachel is being favored by being given a special garment. The first time, the results were disastrous for Yosef and his brothers. Why would Yosef even consider doing this?

The "solution" to the problem of the brothers is not reached by avoiding difficult situations. If there is true repentance, then the brothers can be given the exact circumstances to show their change of heart. Seeing things in a proper perspective, the extra gifts to Binyamin do not evoke the jealousy of the brothers; they have repented. (On the other hand, we know of nothing Binyamin did to cause jealousy or hatred.) Be careful in applying this lesson...

This same idea can be seen in Vaychi. Yaakov favors Efrayim over Menashe. This time, Yosef gets very upset. Again we can say that the idea is not to avoid anything that would make one brother jealous, the other arrogant. Menashe and Efrayim showed praiseworthy characteristics in the way they handled their different statuses. This is one of the reasons that we bless our sons, "may G-d

make you like Efrayim and like Menashe..."

A parent has two tasks in this respect. First, he/she should try to avoid situations that create unhealthy jealousy among their children. Second, a parent must educate his/her children to deal with those situations that do arise that can potentially cause bad feelings between siblings.

Yosef sends his brothers back to Yaakov with wagons (which is a personal coded message between son and father based on the topic they were studying at the time of the Sale of Yosef) and gifts. The brothers tell Yaakov all that has happened. He refuses to believe that Yosef is really alive, until he sees the wagons. Yaakov's spirit is revived.

## **R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 8 p'sukim - 45:28-46:7**

Yaakov tells his sons to hurry with their preparations so that he can get to see Yosef before he (Yaakov) dies. On the way to Egypt, they stop at Be'er Sheva where Yaakov offers sacrifices to G-d. G-d appears to him and assures him that He will protect him and accompany him on his sojourn. The family continues its trip and arrives in Goshen.

Rashi points out that G-d promised that Yaakov would be brought back to Eretz Yisrael for burial. The

promise of becoming a great nation was not enough to calm Yaakov.

**SDT:** In explanation of why Yosef never communicated with his father in all the years of separation, one commentary suggests that had Yaakov known about the sale of Yosef, he would have considered his sons in violation of the Torah's prohibition against kidnapping - and act against them accordingly. Therefore, Yosef did not tell his father what had happened. (And this includes not telling him about what had happened, even now when everyone was reunited.) There are other explanations, as well.

## **Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 20 p'sukim - 46:8-27**

[S> 46:8 (20)] The Torah now lists the names of the "70 souls" (including Yosef and his sons) who went down to Egypt with Yaakov. (The seed is planted; the harvest many years hence will be the Nation of Israel.)

### **The 70 Souls...**

**Note** the atypical mention (and counting) of female offspring - Yaakov's daughter Dina (from Leah) and Serach bat Asher. Tradition attributes to Serach great longevity - she was the oldest person to leave Egypt, making her an eyewitness to the entire Egyptian experience. (Perhaps Yocheved was, too.)



**Notice** the label of B'CHOR (first-born) for Reuven, here and in other places in the Torah. Although Levi, Yehuda, and Yosef each ended up with a "feature" that we would identify with the firstborn, these roles being taken away from Reuven because of his short-comings, he nonetheless is repeatedly identified as Yaakov's B'CHOR.

**Reuven** (1) and his sons **Chanoch** (2), **Palu** (3), **Chetzron** (4), **Carmi** (5);

**Shimon** (6) and his sons **Y'mu'el** (7), **Yamin** (8), **Ohad** (9), **Yachin** (10), **Tzochar** (11), **Shaul** (12); (Rashi says that Shaul was Dina's child from Sh'chem, raised by Shimon as his own. On the other hand, some say that Dina had a girl who was raised by Potifar and his wife - namely, A-S'NAT);

**Levi** (13) and his sons **Gershon** (14), **K'hat** (15), **M'rari** (16);

**Yehuda** (17) and his sons Eir and Onan (both of whom who died in Canaan, but are mentioned here, though not counted among the 70), **Sheila** (18), **Peretz** (19), **Zerach** (20), and Peretz's sons **Chetzron** (21), **Chamul** (22);

**Yissachar** (23) and his sons **Tola** (24), **Puva** (25), **Yov** (26), **Shimron** (27);

**Z'vulun** (28) and his sons **Sered** (29), **Eilon** (30), **Yachl'eil** (31);

These are Leah's children plus **Dina** (32).

The Torah says the total from Leah is 33. Rashi says that the 33rd of Leah's "children" is **Yocheved** (33), daughter of Levi, who was born as they entered Egypt (or conceived in Eretz Yisrael and born in Egypt, hence, "brought down" to Egypt).

**That's 33 souls from Leah.**

**Gad** (34) and his sons **Tzifyon** (35), **Chagi** (36), **Shuni** (37), **Etzbon** (38), **Eiri** (39), **Arodi** (40), **Areili** (41);

**Asher** (42) and his children **Yimna** (43), **Yishva** (44), **Yishvi** (45), **B'ri'a** (46), their sister **Serach** (47), and the sons of B'ri'a, **Chever** (48) and **Malki'el** (49);

**The souls from Zilpa are 16.**

**Yosef** (50) and **Binyamin** (51); Yosef's sons who were born from A-s'nat in Egypt (they are nonetheless included in the 70 Souls) - **Menashe** (52) and **Efrayim** (53);

Binyamin's sons **Bela** (54), **Becher** (55), **Ashbel** (56), **Geira** (57), **Naaman** (58), **Eichi** (59), **Rosh** (60), **Mupim** (61), **Chupim** (62), **Ard** (63)

**Souls from Rachel are 14.**

**Dan** (64) and his son(s) **Chushim** (65); Dan's one son is identified with B'NEI, plural. The Gemara explains the use of the plural is a glimpse into the future of a large tribe that descended from Dan.

**Naftali** (66) and his sons **Yachtz'eil**

(67), **Guni** (68), **Yeitzer** (69), **Shileim** (70).

**Souls from Bilha are 7.**

66 went down to Egypt (actually 67 counting Yocheved) and Yosef and his sons who were already in Egypt, bringing the total - not counting daughters-in-law - to 70.

Remember that the "whole world" that came from No'ach was 70 (nations). We now find the same number in Yaakov's descendants. Their 70 became the Nations of the World. Our 70 souls multiply to become the Jewish People, AM YISRAEL.

Another possibility for the "missing" person: Count Yaakov among the 70 souls and not Yocheved. Total is still 70 with all the names actually mentioned in the text. (But then Yaakov would be part of the Leah sub-total, which doesn't work too well, unless we put him there with the majority of his offspring.)

## **Shishi** - Sixth Aliya - 17 p'sukim - 46:28-47:10

[S> 46:28 (34)] Yaakov sends Yehuda ahead, to complete preparations for the family's descent to Egypt. Yosef sends a royal chariot for his father.

When Yaakov and Yosef meet, Yosef embraces Yaakov and cries.

Yosef then prepares (some of) his

brothers to meet Par'o. It is a sensitive issue because Yaakov and family are shepherds (and sheep are deified by Egypt). Yosef presents his father and five brothers to Par'o. Par'o again offers the best of the land to Yosef's family. Par'o asks Yaakov how old he is. Yaakov says that he has lived 130 bitter years and that he does not expect to live as long as his father or grandfather. Yaakov blesses Par'o (having done so when first presented to Par'o - Rashi says that these were courtesy greetings to royalty) and Yaakov takes his leave.

**Rashi brings a Midrash that says that Yaakov's bracha to Par'o was that the Nile should rise above its banks when he approaches it. And so it was, from then on.**

## **Sh'VII** - Seventh Aliya - 17 p'sukim - 47:11-27

Yosef sets up his family with the best the land has to offer. Meanwhile, the famine intensifies in Egypt. Yosef carefully controls the food supplies and before long has amassed for Par'o all the wealth, possessions and land (except for that of the clergy) of the people of Egypt. Finally, the peoples of Egypt become slaves to Par'o in exchange for sustenance. Yaakov's family flourishes greatly.

**As mentioned earlier, this is the only sedra that does not end with a parsha break. The significance of this is**

explained by the commentaries of the opening pasuk of next week's sedra.

3 p'sukim are reread for Maftir.

## Haftara - 14 p'sukim - Yechezkeil 37:15-28

The antagonism in the beginning of Parshat Vayigash between Yehuda and Yosef is the fore-runner of the split of the Jewish People into the kingdoms of Yehuda and Yisrael (represented by Efrayim, Yosef's son). In this portion from the Prophets, G-d tells Yechezkeil to take two sticks - one marked for Yehuda and one for Yosef/Efrayim - and hold them together until they merge into one. When the people ask the meaning of this, the prophet is to tell them about the reunification of the tribes. This reconciliation, which is also the theme of the sedra, will produce the One Nation that will once again be the "dwelling place" of G-d. WE will know that, as will the nations of the world. As happy as is the reconciliation of the brothers in the sedra, both the sedra and haftara remind us of rough times to come, throughout Jewish History. The "pot of gold" is at the end of the proverbial rainbow, the time of the Complete Geula, when the people will be united, the people will all keep Torah and mitzvot, the people will return to Eretz Yisrael from the far-flung places of their dispersion, and the Beit HaMikdash will stand in Jerusalem forever,

**BIMHEIRA V'YAMEINU - AMEIN.**